REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application.

Claims 1-14 and 26-33 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 15-25 and 34-37 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,493,677 to Balogh et al. ("Balogh").

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 15

Balogh fails to disclose or teach: "extracting a steganographic reference to auxiliary data in the image." The watermark referred to in Balogh alters the blue channel of an image in a manner that allows the image to be viewed without obstruction on a computer monitor, but prevents high-quality printout of the image. This watermark does not carry any data, and specifically does not carry a reference to auxiliary data. See col. 10, line 50 to col. 11, line 52. Therefore, it fails to anticipate claim 15.

The Office has cited col. 8, line 64 to col. 9, line 14 as allegedly teaching this aspect of claim 15. This passage states: "Image 250 and metadata 262 are applied to uploading, archiving, watermarking and indexing service 302 for initial processing. Service 302 transfers full-resolution images, e.g., 250 for long-term storage onto a conventional medium such as magnetic tape; generates browse-resolution images, watermarks such images and stores them for browsing service 308; stores metadata and any additions to the semantic net resulting from disambiguation for index querying service 306, and stores licensing and pricing information for use by purchase and delivery service 310 to permit on-line delivery of a full-resolution image 350." While this passage refers to both metadata and watermarking, a watermark is not used to convey a reference to auxiliary data in an image as claimed. In Balogh, there is no relationship between the watermark and the metadata as claimed.

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Claim 20

Balogh fails to disclose or teach: "each item being associated with an image via a reference steganographically encoded in the image".

Claim 24

Balogh fails to disclose: "receiving a steganographic link extracted from an image, the link referencing auxiliary data about the image." The Office has failed to show how the art discloses or teaches all of the elements of claim 24.

Claim 34

Balogh fails to disclose an image database including: a history file detailing the vendors from whom a consumer has requested service relating to an image. The Office has cited col. 1, lines 48-52 as allegedly disclosing this element. This passage indicates that pricing information may be stored for an image, but does not refer to anything that resembles the claimed history file.

Claim 35

Balogh fails to disclose or teach the claimed transaction history. The cited passage at col. 4 lines 35-47 refers to an electronic system enabling users to order images and processing ordering transactions. However, there is no discussion of a transaction history as claimed.

Concluding Remarks

Balogh fails to disclose teach or suggest all of the elements of the independent claims. The dependent claims are patentable for the same reasons as the independent claims, and in addition, they include further elements that distinguish Balogh. Therefore, the pending claims are patentable over Balogh. Applicants note that certain claims have been withdrawn from consideration in response to a restriction requirement. When the application is otherwise ready for issue, the non-elected claims will be canceled and any change of inventorship caused by such cancellation addressed at that time.
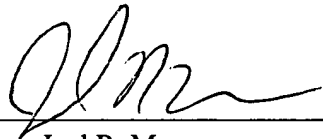
Date: November 13, 2003

Customer Number 23735

Telephone: 503-885-9699
FAX: 503-885-9880

Respectfully submitted,

DIGIMARC CORPORATION

By_____
Joel R. Meyer
Registration No. 37,677